



## State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

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Date: January 28, 2016

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Fr: Senator Sheila Harsdorf

Re: Senate Bill 358- Eliminating the prevention specialist-in-training requirement

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Dear Chair Vukmir and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 358 (SB 358), which would eliminate the prevention specialist-in-training requirement. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of this proposal.

The Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) licenses substance abuse professionals; among them Prevention Specialists and Prevention Specialists-In-Training. These are highly trained individuals who work in various school and community settings to provide education and other drug and alcohol prevention services.

Under current law, anyone wishing to become a licensed Prevention Specialist must fulfill certain criteria relating to experience and education, pay a fee, and pass an examination approved by the Department. The other prerequisite is to hold a Prevention Specialist In-Training license for one year.

This bill would eliminate the Prevention Specialist-In-Training license, and allow individuals in this profession to apply immediately to become a Prevention Specialist. It would maintain the current criteria for becoming a Prevention Specialist, removing only the requirement that one obtain the In-Training designation first. Individuals currently holding the Prevention Specialist-In-Training license will be able to apply right away for the full Prevention Specialist license.

This simple bill was requested by a constituent who views the Prevention Specialist-In-Training license as an unnecessary regulatory burden. Candidates can be effectively judged on their experience and knowledge through the criteria for the Prevention Specialist license. Removing this requirement may encourage more individuals to pursue work in substance abuse prevention fields, a critical resource in maintaining healthy communities in our state. I want to emphasize that Prevention Specialists do not provide medical or counseling services, but serve as public health educators to help individuals maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle.

I urge your support of this legislation that would help eliminate unnecessary regulation that delays qualified individuals from obtaining licensure to help our communities with drug and alcohol prevention efforts. I would welcome the opportunity to respond to any questions.



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# ADAM JARCHOW

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 28<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony – SB 358 / AB 483  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Thursday, January 28, 2016 – 11:00 a.m.  
201 Southeast

SB 358 eliminates the DSPS designation of “Prevention Specialist in Training.” A prevention specialist is a person employed by a county who is meant to educate the public about the risks of doing drugs and becoming addicted to controlled substances. This bill does not address the functions of this position or its merits, but the hoops that one must jump through to finally become a Prevention Specialist and help their communities.

In order to become a Prevention Specialist, you must complete classwork, become certified, and complete continuing education courses. Once all that is finished, under current law, you must be a “Prevention Specialist in Training” for a period of one year. Therefore, instead of going out and educating a community on the dangers of addiction and drug abuse, this person must wait in the wings for one year – in our eyes, an arbitrary waiting period. Since becoming a Prevention Specialist requires classwork and certification, we see no reason for a one year “in training” period and propose that it be eliminated.

This session, the Legislature has been focusing heavily on combating drug abuse and addiction. We see this as another, albeit very small, step in the right direction to preventing drug abuse in Wisconsin.

The idea for this bill came from a constituent of Representative Jarchow and Senator Harsdorf. The constituent is the current Prevention Specialist in Polk County and had to go through this process not too long ago. I will read a portion of what she told our offices when explaining the need for this bill...

Dear Senator Harsdorf,

I talked with you a bit yesterday about the Prevention Specialist Licensure and this is the follow up email I promised to pass along.

I have Bachelors Degree in Community Health (Public Health) and have been working in the Prevention field for 3 years now.

When I started the process of getting my Prevention Specialist License all that was necessary was to complete the forms to prove that you had the experience and education required then take the exam. And of course send a check for almost three hundred dollars.

I turned in all my paperwork and took my exam. I passed. However I then got a letter in the mail from the state saying I now had to obtain my prevention specialist in training license. This would then need to be held for a year before I could retry for the prevention specialist license. (It cost another \$75 dollars for the In-Training License and I believe I would then have to pay the \$300 again to retake the exam).

I know that I am not the only one struggling with this problem there are prevention workers in Burnett, and Barron Counties in the same position as me. I just believe we should be judged on our experience and knowledge not on how many hoops we jump through to meet state requirements.

I can understand someone that does not have a degree in a related field or experience in prevention, that they would need to first obtain the In-Training licensure. However that is not the majority of cases!

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns any help you could give us would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Hagen B.S.

Health Educator